

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1061

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UNCLAS STOCKHOLM 4211

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TAGS: ECON, ENRG, SW

SUBJECT: SWEDEN FINALLY INTENSIFIES EFFORTS TO SAVE FUEL

REF: STOCKHOLM 4132

1. IN TURNABOUT ACTION DIFFERING FROM HIS EARLIER MILD AND OPTIMISTIC TONE, COMMERCE MINISTER KJELL-OLOF FELDT AT PRESS CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 27 ANNOUNCED THAT OIL SUPPLY SITUATION IN SWEDEN NOW APPEARS MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN IT HAD A WEEK AGO. HE RECOMMENDED IMMEDIATE VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE WITH EIGHT-POINT GOVERNMENT PROGRAM FOR SAVING FUEL AND POWER, AND SAID GOVERNMENT IS ASKING RIKSDAG FOR LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY TO RATION OIL, GASOLINE, AND ELECTRICITY EARLY IN NEW YEAR. WHILE MEASURES EXCLUDE INDUSTRIAL USERS, HE SAID THAT ENERGY CONSUMPTION MUST BE CUT BY 15 PERCENT IF INDUSTRY IS TO BE UNAFFECTED LATER THIS WINTER.

2. FELDT URGED FOLLOWING VOLUNTARY MEASURES (WHICH GOS HOPES WILL BE ADHERED TO AND THUS PRECLUDE MANDATORY MEASURES):

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-- REDUCED DELIVERIES OF HOME HEATING OIL TO CONSUMERS BY 25 PERCENT (IMPLEMENTED BY OIL COMPANIES):

- NO HOT WATER AT LEAST THREE DAYS A WEEK IN PRIVATE DWELLINGS;
- NO ADVERTISING LIGHTING;
- NO LIGHTS IN STORE WINDOWS AFTER BUSINESS HOURS;
- REDUCED STREET LIGHTING;
- REDUCED CONSUMPTION OF GASOLINE BY PASSENGER CARS BY 15 PERCENT;
- NO SALES OF GASOLINE IN JERRY CANS OR DRUMS;
- NO SALES OF GASOLINE IN VENDING MACHINES.

3. FELDT DESCRIBED GOVERNMENT PREPARATIONS FOR MANDATORY CURBS. GASOLINE WOULD BE RATIONED, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 7, 1974, IF THERE WERE NO IMPROVEMENT IN PETROLEUM SUPPLY SITUATION. NORMAL RATION WILL BE 80 LITERS PER PERIOD, LENGTH OF WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN SPECIFIED. GASOLINE RATION CARDS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL CAR OWNERS IN NEXT FEW WEEKS. (FELDT DISMISSED BAN ON SUNDAY DRIVING ON GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD RESULT IN LESS THAN ONE PERCENT SAVING IN GASOLINE WHEREAS GASOLINE CONSUMPTION MUST GO DOWN AT LEAST 15 PERCENT.) HE ADDED THAT PREPARATIONS ARE ALSO UNDER WAY TO INTRODUCE CUSTOMER QUOTA SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATING HEATING OIL ON BASIS OF PREVIOUS CONSUMPTION AND TO RATION ELECTRICITY STARTING FIRST QUARTER OF 1974 IF NECESSARY.

4. IN JUSTIFYING INTENSIFIED PROGRAM, FELD SAID THERE HAD BEEN A "MARKED REDUCTION" IN SWEDISH OIL SUPPLIES IN RECENT DAYS, PARTICULARLY IN HEATING OIL, FOR REASONS HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND. OIL COMPANIES HAVE CALCULATED THAT, FOR PERIOD NOVEMBER THROUGH JANUARY, SUPPLY OF GASOLINE WILL BE DOWN 10 PERCENT, DIESEL AND LIGHT HEATING OIL DOWN 20 PERCENT, AND HEAVY HEATING OIL DOWN 15 PERCENT.

5 COMMENT. GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CRITICIZED BY BOTH OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADERS AND OIL COMPANIES FOR UNDERESTIMATING SERIOUSNESS OF OIL SITUATION AND NOT MOVING EARLIER TO CONSERVE OIL AND ENERGY. OIL COMPANY HEADS, WHO MET WITH FELDT FOR TWO AND A HALF HOURS YESTERDAY BEFORE HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, APPARENTLY FINALLY GOT THEIR POINT ACROSS.
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